

VZCZCXRO5560
PP RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHCN
DE RUEHKT #0679/01 2050845
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 240845Z JUL 09
FM AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0535
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 7050
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 3143
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU PRIORITY 0478
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 3053
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA PRIORITY 4682
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 4011
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 2373

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 000679

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR PRM, G, SCA/INS, EAP/CM, G;
GENEVA FOR RMA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREF PHUM](#) [PREL CH IN NP](#)

SUBJECT: NEPAL: UNHCR ADVOCATES REGISTERING TIBETANS

REF: A. KATHMANDU 645

[1](#)B. KATHMANDU 569

Summary

[1](#)1. (SBU) During a July 13 meeting of the U.S.-hosted Tibetan Discussion Group, Kathmandu's UNHCR Representative Daisy Dell advocated for registration of Tibetan refugees in Nepal. Based on experience with Nepal's Bhutanese refugee community, Dell sees registration as the necessary first step toward durable solutions for Tibetan refugees in Nepal. Dell does not believe that registration will increase Tibetans' vulnerability and urged Group members to raise registration bilaterally with the Government of Nepal. Dell introduced UNHCR's registration proposal separately to the Prime Minister and Home Minister. She reported that both responded positively in principle.

U.S. Plus Ten Discuss Tibetans

[1](#)2. (SBU) The Charge d'Affaires convened a meeting of the Tibetan Discussion Group, an informal gathering of Kathmandu-based diplomats, on July 13 at the U.S. Embassy to discuss recent events and trends regarding Tibetan refugees in Nepal. Representatives of the governments of Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Finland, Germany, India, Japan, Norway, and the United Kingdom attended. Representatives of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) also participated.

UNHCR: Tibetan Registration Important

[1](#)3. (SBU) After a general discussion of recent events that had prompted concerns about the Nepal government's relationship with its Tibetan community (see reftel A), UNHCR's Dell raised the issue of registration of all Tibetan refugees in Nepal. Dell commented that her Kathmandu assignment would conclude at the end of July and explained the basis for her belief that the international community should adopt a strategy of pressing for Tibetan registration. Dell recalled that registration had been an important step that helped the Nepali government to agree to third country resettlement of the Bhutanese refugees, the only viable durable solution for that group. Dell said that she hoped that registration would open up the possibility of greater rights for Tibetans who choose to remain in Nepal, including the option of citizenship, and third country resettlement for

those who are unable to remain in Nepal. She urged the others at the table to raise the issue bilaterally and provided a non-paper on Tibetan registration for participants' use.

Government Response Tentatively Positive

¶4. (SBU) Dell reported that she raised Tibetan registration at a July 10 meeting with the Prime Minister and said she described it to him as a way to provide both rights and responsibilities to the Tibetans. Dell said that the PM responded positively and indicated he would look into the matter further.

¶5. (SBU) Dell also introduced the Tibetan registration proposal to the new Home Minister, Bhim Rawal, during her July 17 farewell call. Dell said that Rawal seemed interested in and favorably disposed toward the concept of a Tibetan registration program. She provided the Home Minister with the same non-paper given to the Discussion Group. Dell explained that UNHCR has also shared a plan for Tibetan registration with the Home Ministry at the working level, in conjunction with the Ministry's annual budget request to UNHCR, and has received a positive response at that level as well. UNHCR plans to follow up with the Home Ministry's National Unit for the Coordination of Refugee Affairs (NUCRA) shortly, once the Minister has had an opportunity to digest the proposal.

Registration and Tibetans' Vulnerability

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¶6. (SBU) In response to a question from the Canadian representative as to whether a registration program could make some Tibetans -- those not clearly entitled to status -- more vulnerable, Dell said that on balance she thought not. Dell explained that she believed that there is a firm commitment by the Nepalis to protect the Tibetans from refoulement. She believed that deportation remained unlikely, but the situation in Nepal had deteriorated and that registration would be unlikely to increase the Tibetan refugees' vulnerability. Dell noted that it would at least give some recourse to the Tibetans who now have no ability to counter routine shakedowns and harassment.

¶7. (SBU) Dell and the Charge suggested that sympathetic governments could intervene bilaterally with the Government of Nepal on behalf of the Tibetans. Both noted that the Home Minister seems to be a man who wants to make a difference and that this could be an opportunity to achieve Government support for Tibetan registration.

Comment

¶8. (SBU) Ambassador Powell raised Tibetan refugees, including the registration issue, during farewell calls with the Prime Minister, Foreign Minister (reftel B), and Home Minister. Post will continue to press these concerns with Nepali leaders.

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